

‘American’—cities were ‘marks of capital accumulation and cultural confidence’ (p. 203). I was also largely convinced by Hornsby’s argument that different patterns of social change in the British Atlantic and American frontier were rooted in the differential availability of agricultural land.

But I have a few niggles. First, while the question of power is flagged in the sub-title it is not explicitly theorised (or fully indexed), and ideological and political power subsequently receive considerably less attention than economic and social power. Hornsby could have fruitfully delved into questions of discourse and representation (there is now a large literature on their North American colonial purchase) without losing sight of the material geographies that (rightly) matter to him. Second, while the book is publicised as a contribution to ‘comparative’ and ‘transnational’ approaches to the past, we get only a slender understanding of what was going on in the metropolitan core and other parts of the British imperial world, or of how North American colonial processes impacted on Britain, London or Liverpool. Hornsby seems more interested in what happened to metropolitan ideas, capital and colonists once they got to British North America than in where they came from, and more interested in land than in the oceanic circuits and spaces that shaped metropolitan/colonial connections and asymmetries. This book is very much about colonial North America (with port towns as key metropolitan/colonial break of bulk points, if you will), and less fully about a British *Atlantic world*. On the other hand, and mercifully, Hornsby mitigates the metropolitan bias in many recent works on the British Atlantic. Read thus, this book reveals that the ‘Atlantic approach’ he sees his work as a part of is struggling to bring metropole and colony into a coeval and integrated analytical field. Finally, historians and specialists will probably carp about the peoples and problematics that Hornsby pushes to one side: how British North America was backed into a French and Spanish colonial presence (which is only really dealt with at the end of the book); and particularly, perhaps, native people. Lines such as, ‘To be sure, native people had to be dispossessed... but overall there was enormous potential’ in the agricultural frontier, do little to assuage the impression that I picked up that Hornsby views native people and an ‘Amerindian approach’ as playing unimportant roles in the advance and study of British settlement and trade (p. 175).

But while the book does not quite live up to all of the words on its dust jacket, let us not dwell on its silences and limitations. What Hornsby does provide is a lucid and persuasive synthesis of some basic geographical differences and cleavages that made (and unmade) British North America.

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Richard Armstrong, *A Compulsion for Antiquity: Freud and the Ancient World*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2005, US\$35.00 hardback.

Classics departments are ‘survivals’ — to use a word much beloved of psychoanalysis. They are like fragments broken off European pre-war culture, which have somehow persisted into the present. In this book Richard Armstrong, a Classics professor at the University of Houston,

demonstrates the extent to which this status as a living anachronism equips him to bring before us one of the richest, most convincing, and illuminating portraits of Freudian psychoanalysis to come along in years. In the introduction he suggests that ‘our growing distance from the archive of antiquity implies that we are in the process of losing our grip on psychoanalysis itself, as Freud conceived it’ (p. 5), a proposition that he proceeds to confirm by showing us exactly how tight is his classicist’s grip on Freud’s notoriously slippery project.

In providing this analysis, Armstrong has preformed an inestimable service. Like the two Freud museums — the sparsely furnished one in his apartment in Vienna and the overstuffed one in his Hampstead villa — Freud’s intellectual legacy in academia has tended to split into two under the pressure of the terrible events of mid-century. On the one hand we have admirable, synchronic Freud, the proto-postmodernist who exposed the radical instability of a self whose past could be reassembled and reconfigured in the space of the therapeutic encounter. On the other hand we have embarrassing, diachronic Freud, the positivist *Wissenschaftler* who believed in racial memory, phylogenetic inheritance, and neuroscientific reductionism. In approaching psychoanalysis from the perspective of its engagement with antiquity, Armstrong has made these contradictions disappear, reconstructed psychoanalysis in much of its pre-war wholeness, and restored Freud to us as ‘the historical individual who founded this discourse with all its blindness and insight, and not the impossible colossus he often balloons into under the storm and stress of cultural debate’ (p. 7).

As well as situating Freud in his intellectual context, Armstrong engages with the arguments of psychoanalysis itself, in some of those places where its deployment of antiquity is particularly central, problematic, or revealing. For this reviewer’s taste, the six ‘case studies’ that comprise this section of the book are the least successful chapters. Even all his classical erudition cannot guide our author out of the labyrinth of mirrors that is psychoanalytic criticism. Although he does battle valiantly — fencing agilely with the parricidal implications of criticising the Oedipus complex for example — these chapters sound too much like dozens of other nimble-footed academic sparing matches with the ‘impossible colossus’. Occasionally, too, Armstrong lapses into a diction unworthy of his subject, as when he characterizes Nietzsche’s extraordinary defence of the Dionysian orgy in *Twilight of the Idols* as ‘naughty Hellenism’ (p. 231), or where he asks, with self-confessed ‘impertinence’, ‘to what extent does the analysand lose her Elgin marbles in the course of Freud’s scientific expedition?’ (p. 121).

None of this detracts from the vigour of Armstrong’s reconstruction of the neo-classical matrix out of which psychoanalysis sprang. As he points out, this period is rather poorly understood, an obscurity that he attributes to an embarrassment of riches: ‘There was such a welter of new information about the ancient world and new forms of interpreting it during this period (1870–1933) that the only clear paradigm seems to be one of a Babelic confusion, a crisis of abundance’ (p. 28). Out of this Babel, however, he manages to delineate the salient features of that vertiginous deepening of historical consciousness so central to modernism and so perfectly exemplified by psychoanalysis. He rightly characterized the period as marked by a ‘confrontation with ... a past that seemed to erupt suddenly and scandalously into the public imaginary, revealing an unsuspected backward extension of time well beyond what human history recounts, while tossing out material enigmas for the mind to ponder, like the archaeopteryx, winged phallic artefacts, and snake-handling, bare-breasted Minoan goddesses’ (p. 31).

Armstrong’s understanding of the way in which the materials of the classical curriculum were welded onto the end of the new secular grand narrative of human origins that ran from cosmology

to archaeology finally makes sense of the psychoanalytic historicizing of the human condition. He persuasively argues that psychoanalysis positioned itself as a *scientia mediatrix* between the traditionally separate domains of the *Geistes-* and *Naturwissenschaften*, one of a score of ‘racial sciences’ that claimed to illuminate the twilight border between the human and animal worlds.

Freud was a member of a generation whose historical consciousness and classical erudition will probably never be equalled. In his introduction Armstrong laments the loss of our ‘sense of tragedy’ in ‘the age of Prozac’, our loosening grip on the moderns ‘who unmasked for us the *ancient régime* of consciousness and limpid rationality by summoning Oedipus and Dionysus from the Tartarus of European memory’ (p. 5). In his grasp of German historiography as well as his familiarity with the ancient archive, Armstrong displays the depth of learning to which all critics of psychoanalysis and scholars of modernism must aspire in our efforts to understand the tragic consciousness of that vanished world.

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Wilhelm Dege (Trans. and Ed. William Barr), *War North of 80: The Last German Arctic Weather Station of World War Two*, Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 1954 (2005), C\$49.95 hardback.

Wilhelm Dege’s *War North of 80: The Last German Arctic Weather Station of World War II* (trans. William Barr) belongs to a number of long, rich, and much-read traditions of writing: narratives on exploration of the far north, celebrations of homo-social adventure, scientific treatises of space and climate, and war journals. As Dege draws on these narrative traditions, however, he adds a unique perspective to them: his Arctic adventures are prompted by the German imperative during World War II to have reliable access to weather reports in the North Atlantic. Dege’s expedition is thus enabled by the Nazi war machine, carrying with it a political and military complicity nearly all historical Arctic adventurers strove to elide from their own narratives, even while they planted the flag on various ‘undiscovered’ headlands which they named for king or country.

The confluence of these varied narrative traditions in the text is part of what makes Dege’s journal a compelling read, for when one narrative thread retreats to the background another takes its place as the focus; no one element in the text is too laboriously treated. At the same time, however, my main criticism of the text is that he tends to treat each tradition too lightly: what I would consider the book’s most unique aspect – Dege’s northern experiences as they specifically relate to life during war – is mentioned only in passing. Dege occasionally makes reference to his purpose for being there – his mission is ‘a unique mix of science and soldiering’ (p. 86) – but, as he himself says, in the isolated setting of Haudegen it is as if the war doesn’t exist at all. Except for the guns each man was required to carry at all times, ‘one might have thought that we were in the midst of peace’ (p. 152). The first overt mention of the expedition’s wartime responsibilities comes nearly halfway through the book, in Chapter ten, ‘Our Official Work’. Significantly, this chapter comes after material whose content is much more to Dege’s taste as an explorer: ‘A Fall Hike to Duvefjorden’ (Chapter eight), an account of an early exploration of the terrain surrounding the outpost,